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## Tajikistan: Khayrullo Mirsaidov sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment

On 11 July 2018, Khujand City Court condemned Tajik human rights defender **Khayrullo Mirsaidov** to 12 years' imprisonment in a strict regime prison colony.

[Khayrullo Mirsaidov](#) is an independent journalist and political analyst. He has reported for Deutsche Welle, Asia-Plus, and Fergana media outlets, among others. Khayrullo Mirsaidov has often written about human rights issues, ecological problems, and respect for ethnic minorities. He also worked as a media development trainer on projects sponsored by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department for International Development (DFID), and the Index on Censorship.

Khayrullo Mirsaidov was found guilty of “embezzlement” under part 4(b) of Article 245, “forgery” under part 1 of Article 340, and “providing false testimony” under part 2(a) of Article 346 of the Criminal Code of Tajikistan.

On 11 July 2018, the Embassies of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the United States, and the EU Delegation in the Republic of Tajikistan [expressed](#) their common grave concern over the trial of Khairullo Mirsaidov, stating that his “sentencing will have a negative impact on the freedom of media and expression in Tajikistan”.

On 5 December 2017, the regional Prosecutor General's office arrested and detained the human rights defender in Khujand, in Tajikistan's northern Sughd region. The charges were brought after Khayrullo Mirsaidov published an open letter to Tajikistan's President to draw his attention to the corruption of local authorities.

On 10 November 2017, Khayrullo Mirsaidov wrote an open letter to President Emomali Rahmon, Prosecutor General Yusuf Rahmon, and the Head of the Sughd region Abdurakhmon Kodiri, asking them to investigate the alleged attempts by Olim Zohidzoda, Head of the Sughd Department of Youth and Sport, to solicit a US \$1,000 bribe from funds allocated by Sughd authorities to the local youth satirical comedy troupe managed by the defender.

Following its publication, tax authorities and the Prosecutor General's office simultaneously began investigating him. The Head of the Sughd Department of Youth and Sport accused Khayrullo Mirsaidov of embezzling the funds.

Front Line Defenders condemns the harsh sentence of Khayrullo Mirsaidov as it is believed to be linked to his vocal criticism on issues of corruption.

### Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Tajikistan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Khayrullo Mirsaidov and quash his conviction as it believes that his imprisonment is solely as a result of his

peaceful and legitimate work in exercising his freedom of expression exposing corruption in Tajikistan.

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Tajikistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.